



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

January 2001- Newsletter 2

A few facts about newsletter responses....

Thank-you for taking the time to complete and send in your response! Newsletter responses are instrumental to the planning process. Responses received by October 27, and a few which trickled in after that deadline, are summarized in this newsletter.

It is important to remember a few facts regarding these responses:

- All responses are important to this planning process;
- Responses do not represent a random sample, rather the individual opinion of those who received a newsletter and spent time to complete and return it;
- Some opinions may not reflect the goals or policies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and may not be implemented.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is developing a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex) that will outline the management direction of the



Wood duck box at Wertheim NWR.

refuges for the next 15 years. The Service has been collecting input from the public, conservation organizations, and local, state and other federal government agencies. This newsletter provides an update on the status of this effort and a summary of comments received.

We held open houses and public scoping meetings on September 26, 27 and 28 in Mastic Beach, Brookhaven and East Hampton, respectively, and on October 18 and 19 in West Sayville and Oyster Bay, respectively. During the afternoon, Open House sessions allowed visitors to talk one-on-one with Service staff. The evening sessions included a presentation on the CCP process and a slide show on the National Wildlife Refuge System, the Complex and the Refuges within the Complex. There was also a comment, question and answer period. Public meetings allowed us to gather information and ideas from local residents and various organizations and agencies.

Our first newsletter, which included a workbook, was mailed out in September, 2000 to more than 1,500 people and was also made available at the Refuge Headquarters at Wertheim NWR, as well as at public meetings. More than 100 people returned completed workbooks.

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A view of the Carmans River.

Responses to Newsletter #1 Workbook



A snowy owl rests on the crest of a primary dune at Amagansett NWR.

How should the Service protect more habitat?

There are several methods the Service uses to protect additional habitat. Following is a list of those methods and the number of respondents that supported each method:

Land acquisition	74
Habitat restoration	54
Environmental education	44
Work with conservation groups	35
Partnerships with landowners	33
Conservation easements	21

Other suggestions included better on-site explanation of the Refuge's purpose and partnering with both public and private organizations.

What are the most important problem(s) facing the Complex today?

Many respondents answered the questions on the most important problem or issue facing the Long Island Refuges today. The main problems identified from the workbook responses, along with the number of responses for each problem, were as follows: Impacts of surrounding land use (i.e., development) (24), public awareness of the Complex and its importance (16), land acquisition (8), littering and

Who did we hear from?

Below are the number of workbooks returned for each Refuge within the Complex and their respective location. Many respondents checked more than one Refuge:

Refuge	Number of Workbooks Returned
■ Wertheim NWR, Shirley	73
■ Morton NWR, Sag Harbor	30
■ Target Rock NWR, Huntington	20
■ Sayville Property, Sayville	12
■ Seatuck NWR, Islip	12
■ Amagansett NWR, Amagansett	10
■ Conscience Point NWR, Noyack	9
■ Oyster Bay NWR, Oyster Bay	7
■ Lido Beach WMA, Lido Beach	3

How many times per year do you visit a Refuge?

When asked how many times a year people visit the Refuge(s), you said:

Visit 0 times/year:	5	Visit 5-25 times/year:	23
Visit 1-5 times/year:	57	Visit >26 times/year:	10

The Respondents' favorite activities on the Refuge(s) are:

• Hiking/Walking	58 (Responses)
• Wildlife Observation	52
• Canoe/Kayaking	17
• Photography	13
• Fishing	8
• Environmental Education	2

Other favorite activities that did not fit into these categories were relaxing, sketching, writing, feeding the birds, swimming, reading, and just sitting quietly.

access with the conservation of wildlife and habitats.



A spotted turtle at Seatuck NWR.

dumping (7), and general maintenance (4). Other problems identified by respondents included habitat protection and restoration, the need for more environmental education programs, lack of financial and staff resources, degradation of water quality, the need for more nature trails, the need for a visitor center, the problem of all-terrain vehicles, predator and invasive species control, and the difficulty of balancing public

Do our recreational facilities meet your needs?

More than half of the respondents to the workbook felt the recreational facilities on the Complex - which include some nature trails, guided and self-guided hikes, fishing and boating access, interpretive signs, brochures and restrooms - meet their needs. Only 11 people said the facilities do not meet their needs. Below are examples of the types of comments we received.

General Comments:

- Weekend hours at Wertheim are a great improvement for access.
- Wertheim nature trail is beautiful and well-maintained.
- Requests for interpretive talks and hikes are always fulfilled.
- New interpretive panels at Target Rock are a nice addition.
- Beaches are fabulous.
- Wildlife viewing opportunities are excellent.

Recommended improvements:

- Provide a visitor center at Wertheim NWR.
- Provide canoe access to the Carmans River at Wertheim NWR.
- Build facilities at Sayville Property (i.e., parking, restrooms, kiosks).
- Create more trails and open more Refuge land for public recreation.
- Install more interpretive signs about wildlife and their habitats.
- Provide trash cans.
- Erect more Refuge boundary signs at Oyster Bay NWR.
- Build restrooms at Oyster Bay NWR.

"We would like to see more informational markers along trails addressing plant and wildlife habitats."

(Public Comment)

What's Next?

During the next couple months, we will begin to develop management strategies to deal with the issues identified (see page 5). Since there are multiple ways to deal with issues, we will develop alternative management strategies. After consideration of public input, budgets, Service goals and policies, we will package together our "proposed action" for the Complex. All management strategies, including the "proposed action" will be evaluated in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (Draft CCP/EIS). We plan to have the Draft CCP/EIS available for release to the public sometime in 2002. Once the Draft CCP/EIS is released, we will schedule more public meetings to provide you with an opportunity to comment on the document. If you have received a copy of this newsletter, you will receive a notice of when the Draft CCP/EIS will be available. Meanwhile, we will continue to update you with newsletters and mailings. We hope you will remain actively involved in the planning process.

What makes the Refuge(s) Special to You?

This workbook question garnered many different responses, such as:

- Peace and quiet, away from human habitation.
- It is a "refuge" for wildlife and for humans.
- Biological diversity, including forest and aquatic habitats.
- Opportunities for birding, kayaking, wildlife observation.
- Convenient locations that are close to home.
- Protecting land on Long Island for future generations.
- Providing opportunities to educate school children.
- Minimum influence by people.
- Knowledgeable and friendly staff.
- Providing opportunities for experiencing nature.



An angler enjoying opportunities off the shore of Target Rock NWR.

Public Meeting Results

ve public scoping meetings were held to obtain public input and comments on issues concerning the Complex. Many critical issues were identified and addressed at these meetings. The Service staff would

like to thank all participants for taking time to attend these public meetings. Additional opportunities will be available to the public for further input and comment during the planning process.

Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge public meetings

Approximately 100 people total attended the public scoping meetings for the Wertheim NWR in late September at the Mastic Beach Property Owner's Association



A rufous-sided towhee rests on a branch at Wertheim NWR.

Building in Mastic Beach and the St. James Episcopal Church annex in Brookhaven. The discussion for Wertheim NWR focused on a proposed Visitor Center/staff office for the Complex. The proposed Visitor Center would highlight the Complex's natural resources and provide educational and interpretive opportunities for the public. A majority of residents who spoke at the first meeting opposed the Center because of their concerns regarding its location (residential area), access, safety, potential impact on property values and uncertainty as to what



A cormorant at Oyster Bay NWR.

activities would occur on the site. On the other hand, several individuals spoke in support of the Center with more individuals speaking up after the meeting. Other topics discussed at the meetings included public access, preventing disturbance to wildlife and wildlands, increased environmental education opportunities, habitat protection along the Carmans River, white-tailed deer management, mosquito concerns, a proposal by a local group to dredge a portion of the Carmans River, and public safety concerns relating to Refuge trespassers.

Morton, Conscience Point and Amagansett National Wildlife Refuges

Although the public meeting for the Complex's eastern Refuges - Morton, Conscience Point and Amagansett - was lightly attended, a number of important issues were addressed at the September 28 meeting, held at the East Hampton Middle School.

Access to and the history of Conscience Point was discussed and also the unique maritime grassland which occurs there and its benefit to wildlife. Environmental education and wildlife viewing opportunities were also touched upon particularly

for Conscience Point and Amagansett Refuges. Issues and comments regarding Morton NWR included piping plover and tern management, the public entrance fee program, nature trails, environmental education programs, and public access.

Seatuck NWR, Sayville Property and Lido Beach Wildlife Management Area

A public meeting for the western units (Seatuck National Wildlife Refuge, Sayville Property and Lido Beach Wildlife Management Area) was held on October 18 at the Suffolk County Parks Headquarters in West Sayville. During the afternoon, numerous individuals browsed the Refuge's informational displays and spoke with Service staff. More than 100 people attended the evening session. A majority of speakers noted support of historical structures and the Peters/Webster house on Seatuck NWR. The Seatuck Envi-

ronmental Association (SEA), a non-profit organization separate from the Refuge, expressed its desire to convert the Peters/Webster House (owned by the Service) to a "Living With Nature" Center leased and operated by SEA. Interest was expressed in the Sayville Property and its proposed future, its value for the endangered sandplain gerardia plant, and its uniqueness as an undisturbed Long Island grassland containing many interesting and rare plants. Several individuals also expressed interest in the mammalian

fauna at these three units. A New York State Department of Environ-



A greater yellowlegs at Lido Beach WMA.

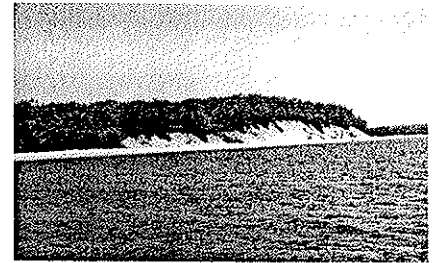
mental Conservation biologist discussed white-tailed deer management in the Town of Islip. The use and appropriate role of prescribed fire was also discussed. Other issues concerned public access, environmental education, public outreach, wetland restoration, and land acquisition.

Oyster Bay and Target Rock National Wildlife Refuges

The public planning meeting for the Complex's northern Refuges, Oyster Bay and Target Rock NWRs, was held on October 19 at the Oyster Bay High School. Comments and issues concerning Target Rock included increasing marine mammal presence in the area (particularly harbor seals and dolphins), nature trail maintenance, the presence of piping plovers, new additions to the visitor program (i.e., interpretive panels and benches), and the impacts of disease on wildlife, in particular the local red fox population. Neighbors of the

Target Rock NWR expressed some concern regarding Refuge visitors trespassing on private lands. Oyster Bay NWR issues included the role of the Service at the Refuge, waterfowl abundance, dock issues, environmental education, water quality, Refuge boundary delineation, law enforcement, and Service presence at the Refuge. Several individuals at the meeting expressed concern about a proposed Nassau County road widening project that would infringe on Oyster Bay NWR. Meeting attendees generally indicated sup-

port for increased interpretive signage, environmental education programs, and Service presence at Oyster Bay NWR.



Headlands/Huntington Bay, Target Rock NWR.

In the next issue . . .

Look for the following items:

- A Vision for the Complex
- Goal statements for the Complex
- Management strategies that deal with the issues

If you have any comments on the items above, or on anything else related to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan, please contact us using one of the following methods:

1. E-mail us at FW5RW_CCP@fws.gov, using "Long Island Complex" as the subject.
2. Write a letter and send it to:
Tom Bonetti, Refuge Planner
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Refuges and Wildlife
300 Westgate Center Drive
Hadley, MA 01035-9589
8. Call Tom Bonetti at (413) 253-8307.

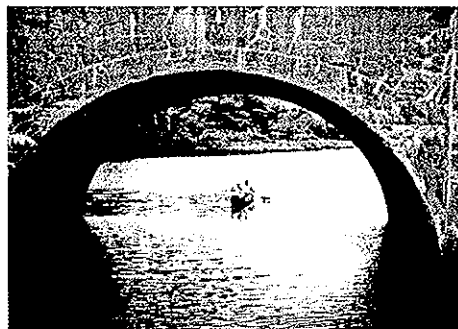
Thank-you in advance for your input and involvement!

Issues and Opportunities at the Complex

There are a variety of issues and opportunities we face at each of the Refuges within the Complex. Some are common to all the refuges in the Complex, and others exist only on particular refuges. Strategies used to deal with these issues form the

basis of the management alternatives that will be detailed in the Draft CCP/EIS. Your input through the workbook, the public scoping meetings and future workshops will help us deal with these issues. The issues are as follows:

- White-tailed deer population
- Mosquito management
- Predator/invasives/exotics
- Prescribed burns
- Land acquisition
- Removal of structures
- Dredging
- Impacts of surrounding land use
- Public use activities/access
- Visitor center
- Entrance fee program
- Friends groups and partnerships
- Visitor Safety
- Resource Protection
- Boundary signing
- Jogging
- Litter and dumping
- All-terrain vehicles
- Poaching
- Refuge closed to public use
- Contamination
- Docks and watercrafts
- Beach closures



Canoeing on the Carmans River

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

"to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."